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Bennett
Story-teller poems.

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Story-Teller Poems

By

ROWENA BENNETT



Illustrations by Donald E. Cooke

Foreword by William Rose Benét

The John C. Winston Company

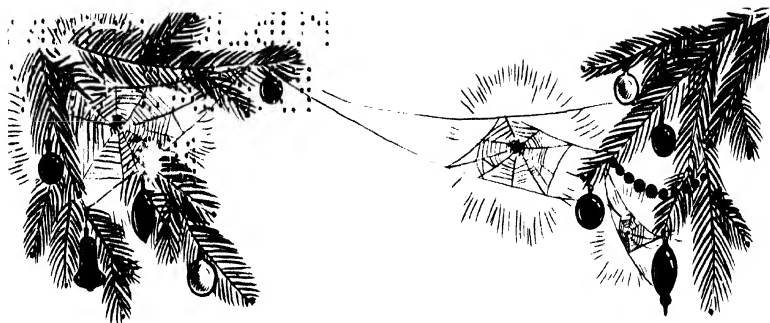
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TO BONNIE BENNETT



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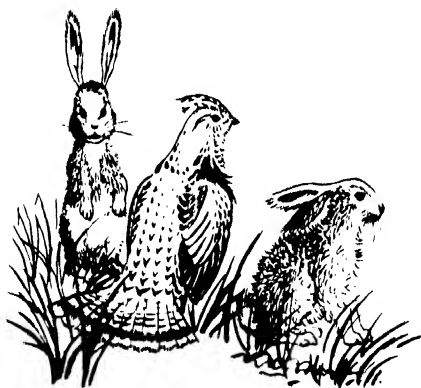
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WEE WISDOM for God Is Like This.

ROWENA BENNETT writes verse for children that they can understand, and what she says has that tang of astonishment at ordinary things that makes childhood so exciting. When she personifies a grumbling truck or a freight train it really comes alive. I like her animals too, and her cheerful fancy.

—William Rose Benét





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Story-Teller Poems





The Story-Teller's House

In a clearing of the wildwood
Where the pheasant and the grouse
Live together (fur and feather)
With the rabbit and the mouse—
In a clearing of the wildwood
Stands the Story-Teller's house.

It's a shabby little dwelling
With an old and creaking stair,
With broken, crooked windows
That perhaps one day were square.
The smoke curls from its chimney
Like a lock of straying hair.

It's a shabby little dwelling
But it has a friendly look,
And the people who live in it,
From the mistress to the cook,
Sleep beneath a strange enchantment
In the pages of a book.

They're the queerest, quaintest people
Who've been living there for ages:
Salty seamen, weathered rustics,
Knights and yeomen, fools and sages.
You have only to address them
To release them from their pages.

Oh, let us find the clearing
Where the pheasant and the grouse
Live together (fur and feather)
With the rabbit and the mouse!
Let us waken all the inmates
Of the Story-Teller's house.



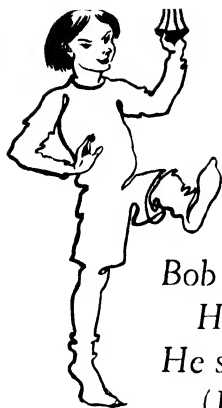


Autumn Wind

When autumn wind goes running
It does some magic things.
It gives the shadows dancing shoes,
It gives the red leaves wings . . .
When autumn wind goes running.

It curls the bonfire's tail of smoke
And shares a little whispered joke
With cornstalks who delight to prattle.
It turns a seed pod to a rattle.

Oh, autumn days are lots of fun
When autumn wind begins to run!



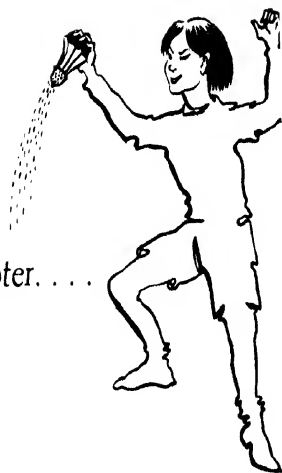
The Magic Pepper Can

Bob Besom was a witch's son—
He was a mischief-maker.
He spied a magic powder can
(Just like a pepper shaker)
Upon his mother's pantry shelf;
And so Bob Besom helped himself.
For, on the label, he could read:
"This is the powder witches need
To turn a broomstick to a steed.
It only works on Halloween
When stars are pumpkin-gold or green."
So straightway, though you must excuse it,
Bob thought of naughty ways to use it.
(Since he was just a witch's son
He knew no proper kind of fun.)
He gave the broom a scornful smile
And tossed it on the refuse pile;
For airplanes had come into style
And they had left but little room
To gallop skyward on a broom.

He hurried out into the night
Where every house had doused its light
And every child had said his prayers
And lay in bed asleep upstairs.
Bob found the playthings of the day
These children had not put away:

The tricycles,
The bicycles,
The wagon wheels,
The pushmobiles,
The barrel hoops,
Toy sailing sloops,
The roller skates
(Not always mates),
The kiddie cars,
The monkey bars,
The scooter,
The tooter
and the long bean shooter. . . .

All of these Bob Bcsom found
Strewn carelessly upon the ground
And with a mumbling sort of sound
He made a hocus-pocus spell



(The kind his mother knew so well).
He waved his arms and then began
To sprinkle powder from the can
On every kind of mobile toy
That's pushed or pumped by girl or boy;
And suddenly, with squeaks and squeals,
The toys rolled off upon their wheels—
With nobody to ride them

or guide them,
or slide them,
or push them,
or rush them,
or pump them,
or bump them,
or saddle them,
or straddle them. . . .

Without the guidance of a child
The toys went rolling free and wild.



The roller skates all swung on rails
Like monkeys with their straps for tails.
The barrel hoops made loop-the-loops
For tiny tanks that rolled in troops.
The tractors all set out to race.
The tricycles began to chase
The bicycles from place to place

The fog horns tooted,
The scooters scooted,
The sirens moaned,
The axles groaned,
The brakes all squealed,
The bike bells pealed,

The riot ran from street to field.

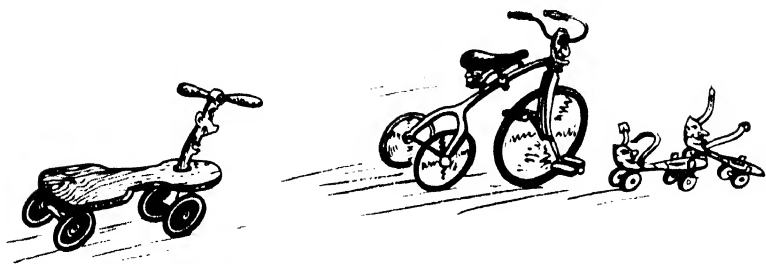
The riot ran from field to lawn

Until the dawn

And those who heard or raised their heads,
Or got up from their cozy beds



To look outdoors, saw such a sight
They turned and ran away in fright.
They jumped again into their beds
And pulled the blankets round their heads.



But when the morning came at last
And no strange terrors hurried past,
They drank their coffee hot and steaming
And told what nonsense they'd been dreaming.
Only Bob, the witch's son,
Believed the nightmares, every one.

(The moral of this tale, if any,
Is, whether you have few or many
Toys to play with on the green,
Don't leave them out, this Halloween.)

If I Were a Pilgrim Child

If I were a Pilgrim child,
Dressed in white or gray,
I should catch my turkey wild
For Thanksgiving Day.
I should pick my cranberries
Fresh from out a bog,
And make a table of a stump
And sit upon a log.
An Indian would be my guest
And wear a crimson feather,
And we should clasp our hands and say
Thanksgiving grace together.
But I was born in modern times
And shall not have this joy.
My cranberries will be delivered
By the grocery boy.
My turkey will be served upon
A shining silver platter.



It will not taste as wild game tastes
Though it will be much fatter;
And, oh, of all the guests that come
Not one of them will wear
Moccasins upon his feet
Or feathers in his hair!

Quietly, Oh, Quietly . . .

Quietly, oh, quietly
Fall the stars of snow
From a sky of stillness
To silent earth below

Quietly, oh, quietly
As I sit and sew
Little happy, secret thoughts
Travel to and fro
Through my mind. I cannot find
How they come and go

Nothing is more silent than
Secret thoughts and snow.



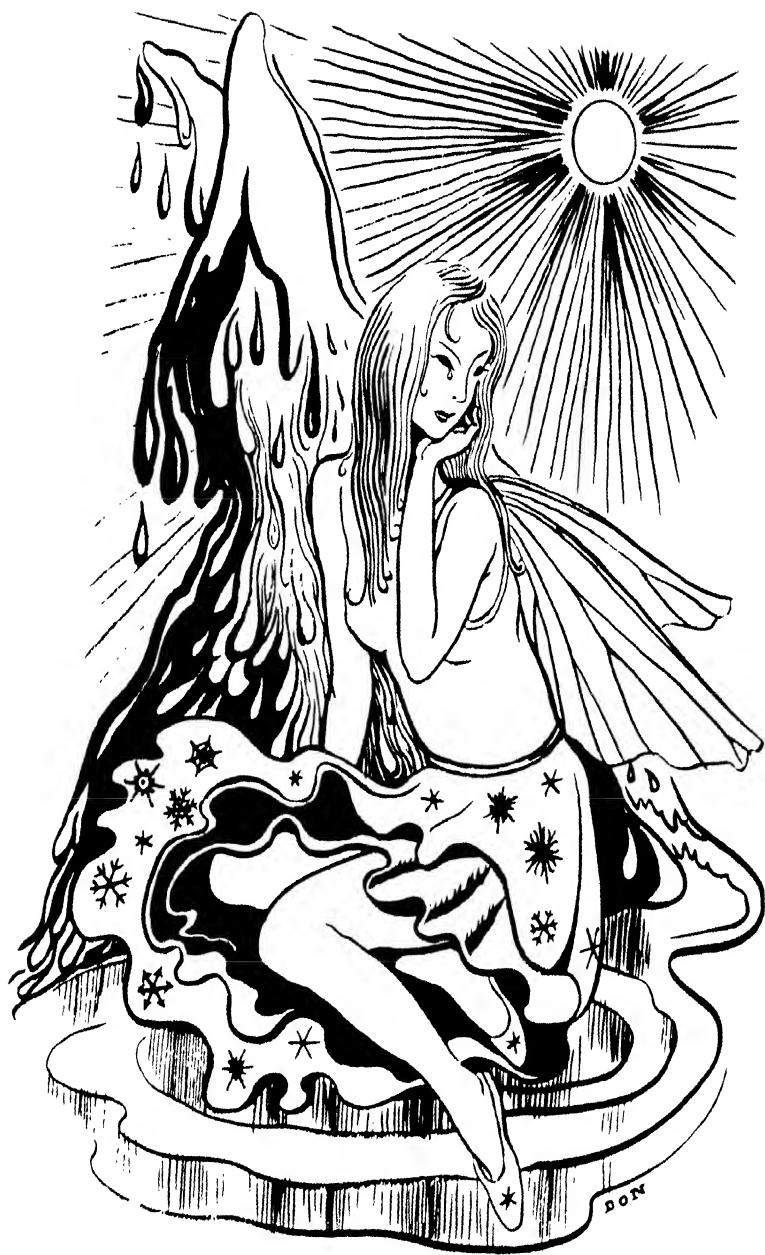
Heigh-Ho! Jack Frost

Heigh-ho, Jack Frost! and where have you gone?
This is the ground that you ran upon,
And this is the trellis you climbed, I know,
For here is the print of your pointed toe;
And here is the picture you started to make
On my windowpane, of a mountain lake
Oh, why did you go away in a rush
And take your palette and silver brush?



The Melting Castle

There once was a fairy who lived long ago
In a castle of ice with a roof top of snow.
Her castle had turrets and icicle towers
Whose windows were curtained with lacy frost
flowers;
And the fairy believed there was nothing as nice
As a roof top of snow with a turret of ice.
But, oh, when the winter was over and done,
Her icicle towers all dripped in the sun!
The fairy no longer sat high on a throne.
She splashed in a puddle, afraid and alone.
She cried out for help as she swam through the water.
(How lucky that she was a cloud-fairy's daughter.)
Her king father heard her (she shouted so loud),
And he lowered a rainbow right out of his cloud.
The frost fairy laughed, for she couldn't be gladder.
She climbed up the rainbow—it made a fine ladder—
And, safe on the cloud top, she said to her father:
“Ice castles are pretty, but, oh, such a bother!”





Stars of Snow

*I saw a cloud with a twisted tail.
It wasn't a monkey; it wasn't a whale;
It wasn't a bird, though it had a wing;
It was just a mixed-up animal thing.*

*It was eating the moon with its furry jaws
And clutching a star in its fuzzy paws,
And I called to it, "Please, whatever you are,
I wish you would toss me that silvery star.
I've traveled by sea and I've traveled by land,
But I never have held a star in my hand."*

*Then the gray cloud growled and lashed its tail.
Down came the rain—down came the hail.
And last, as if he were shedding his hair,
The white snow cluttered the dizzy air.
I looked at my outstretched hand and, lo!
I was holding a million stars of snow.*



Christmas Brownie



There was a Christmas Brownie—
 (Heigh-ho for little people!)
His hair was bright and downy
 As snow upon a steeple.
His laugh was like a sleigh bell,
 As tinkly and as merry.
His cheeks were round and rosy
 As any holly berry.

There was a Christmas Brownie—
 (Heigh-ho for little elves!)
One year he helped old Santa
 Take down from off his shelves
The Christmas toys for girls and boys
 And pack them in the sleigh—
One year he drove with Santa Claus
 Till break of Christmas Day.

But when they reached the last, last house
 (A house of fisher folk),
Old Santa dropped the last, last doll,

And with a crash it broke!
“What shall I do?” poor Santa cried.
“This Mary girl’s a dear.
I’d go back for another doll,
But morning’s almost here.”

As Santa shed a sorry tear,
The little Brownie spoke:
“Since it’s so late, we can’t do much
About the doll we broke.
But I’m as tall as any doll,
And light as any fairy.
So let me climb the Christmas tree
And be a gift for Mary!”

And so he stayed with fisher folk
And thought it was quite jolly
By night to be a Brownie boy,
By day to be a dolly.
Then sing a song for Christmas time
(Heigh-ho for fay and elf!)
But sing your best for Brownie boy,
Because he gave himself.



The Christmas tree stood by the parlor door,
But the parlor door was locked
And the children could not get inside
Even though they knocked.

For a Christmas tree must wait, folks say,
And not be seen till Christmas Day.

But the cat had seen the Christmas tree
As she prowled the house by night,
And the dog had seen the Christmas tree

By the moon's enchanting light;
And a little mouse beside her hole
Had looked at it with eyes of coal.

Even the spiders hoped to see
The secret, silent Christmas tree.

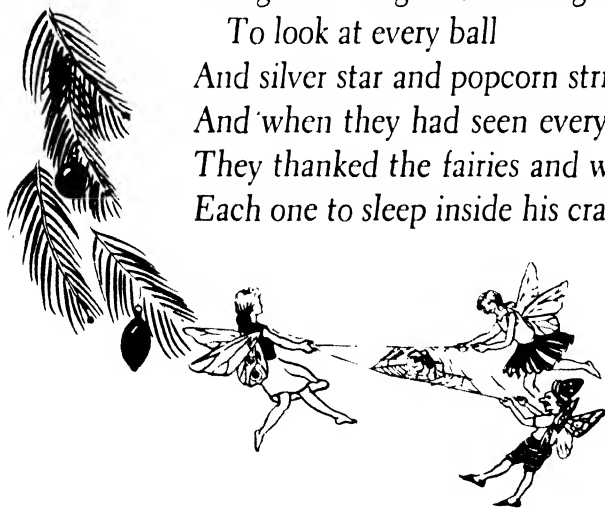
They planned, one day, to creep and crawl
Out of their cracks and up the wall
To get the highest view of all.

But just that day with mop and broom

The housemaid swept them from the room
And so the spiders could not see
The secret, silent Christmas tree.

The fairies heard the spiders weep,
All on a winter's night,
Although their cries made softer sounds
Than moth wings make in flight.
The fairies said: "Each living thing
That creeps, or crawls, or flaps a wing
Shall share the birthday of the King."

They took the spiders to the tree
And, since they were too small
To see as far as cat or mouse,
The fairies let them crawl
Along each twig and bending branch
To look at every ball
And silver star and popcorn string;
And when they had seen everything
They thanked the fairies and went back
Each one to sleep inside his crack.



But, oh, the tree when they were gone
Was very sad to look upon!
Its branches were more gray than green
And little webs hung in between
That dulled the lights and all the sheen.

The fairies shook their heads and sighed,
For in their wisdom, ever wide,
They knew no housewife cared to see
Dull cobwebs on a Christmas tree.
They knew the children, too, would weep
To waken from their yuletide sleep
And glimpse a tree all bearded gray
That would not shine on Christmas Day. . . .

And so they turned the webs to gold
By waving fairy wands, I'm told;
And that is why there'll always be
Bright cobwebs on a Christmas tree.



Let's Carol

Let's carol in the city streets;
Let's sing across the snow;
Let's pause at every doorstep
In the candlelight's glow
Beside the wreath of holly,
Beneath the mistletoe—
To sing the ancient wonder song,
The song of long ago.
Let's tell the Christmas story
Of silent Bethlehem,
Of how the stars one midnight
Became a diadem;
How love flamed in a halo
Around a Virgin's head,
And how a Child was crowned a king
Upon a manger bed.
Let's carol in the city streets;
Let's sing across the snow;
Let's sing the ancient wonder song,
The song of long ago!



Springtime in the Park

I heard the springtime coming
Across the winter snow.
I heard it in an icy brook
That just began to flow.
I heard it in a running wind
That pushed a cloud along.
And in some little hiding thing
That made a chirping song.





When Pussy Willow Comes

When pussy willow comes in spring
She does a lot of slumbering.
She curls herself into a ball
And does not lift her head at all;
And though she's dressed in kitten fur
She does not ever mew or purr.

Our pussy's gone away by fall.
(We do not see her go at all.)
Perhaps by then she's grown too big
To sit upon a willow twig.
Perhaps she leaps into the street
And pads away on kitten feet.



Playing with the Wind

The wind and I went out to play
One day in early March.
He took me far and far away
Beneath the rainbow's arch.
He spun the last year's leaves for me
Into a kind of tower,
Then dropped them down upon my head
All in a crackling shower.
He bent the branches down that I
Might see the pussy willows.
(They slept beneath white sheets of snow
But hadn't any pillows.)
We found a brook, the wind and I,
And stirred it to a foam
I liked my breezy playmate till
He tried to blow me home.

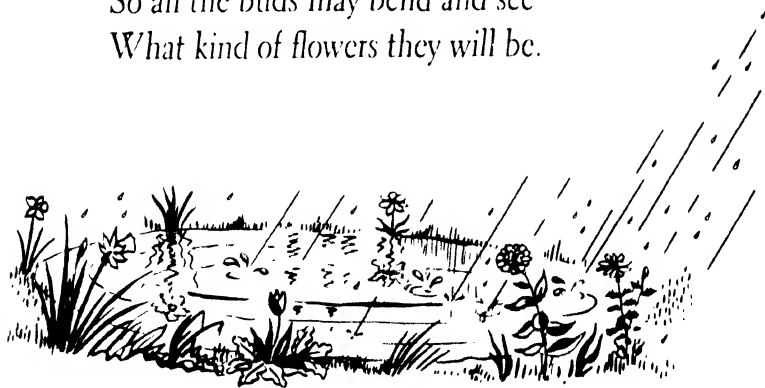


The March Hare Marches

The March Hare marches down the street.
He thumps along on rabbit feet.
He holds his furry ears up high
To hear the robins in the sky.
He wrinkles up his nose until
He smells a golden daffodil.
He naps upon a clover pillow,
Then goes to call on pussy willow.

April Puddle

The rain falls down upon the grass
And makes a silver looking glass,
So all the buds may bend and see
What kind of flowers they will be.





A Walk in Early Spring

I took a walk in early spring
And spoke to every newborn thing.
They answered me, the flowers and birds,
Although they did not talk in words.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit

*Jack-in-the-pulpit is preaching a sermon
To little striped chipmunks, and squirrels, and ermine.
Out where the dewdrops are gleaming and glistening.
Jack does his preaching with forest folk listening.*

*Jack-in-the-pulpit is leading a hymn
Out in the forest where shadows are dim.
High in the treetops the robins are swinging.
They are the choir that does all the singing.*

*Jack-in-the-pulpit is saying a prayer.
It sounds like the whisper of leaves in the air.
Each little flower is bowing its head
Waiting until the "Amen" has been said.*





Sunrise

The first gray smoke of daylight blurs
The morning star. The first bird stirs.

The bright sun bubbles from the sea
And sprays its gold on every tree.

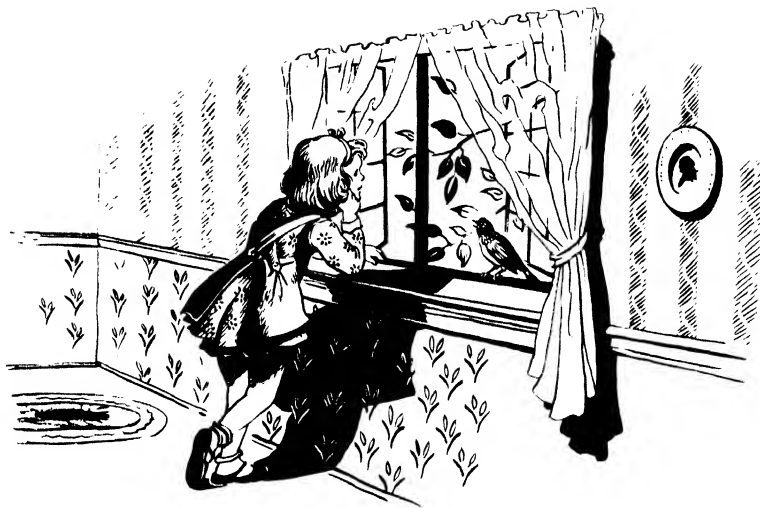
Johnny-Jump-Up

Johnny-jump-up from your bed.
All the little stars are dead—
Stars of frost that sharply shone
On your roof of stick and stone.

Johnny, do not hug your feet.
April folded up your sheet,
Threw away your snowy pillow,
Called for you the pussy willow.

Johnny-jump-up from your bed.
Months ago your prayers you said;
You have slept a solid year.
Rub your blue eye, lift your head—
All the other Johns are here.





A Robin Came to My Window

A robin came to my window
Before the dark was gone.
He brought the sunrise on his breast
And in his beak, a song.

The Flying Squirrel

A flying squirrel is the strangest thing!
He hasn't a feather. He hasn't a wing.
Yet through the air he skims and scoots.
He doesn't fly. He parachutes.

Spring Madrigal

I heard the birds sing a madrigal
In a trilling, high soprano
While the tall trees lifted their fingers thin,
And played the wind's piano.



The Wind Engine

I hear the engine of the wind
Puff-puffing through the sky,
And from its smokestack pour the clouds
As it goes roaring by;
And one small star slides down the dark
As if the wind had shed a spark.





Summer Snowstorm

A dandelion, turning gray,
Shook her silver locks one day;
And down below, a beetle going
Through the grass, cried, "It is snowing!"
He ran so fast they called him "Sprinter"!
And all because he thought 'twas winter.



The Elfin Plane

The dragonfly who hurries by
With hum that never varies
Is like an airplane in the sky
To elfin folk and fairies.
His motor stops, his motor starts
Without a bit of stalling.
His engine is his heart of hearts
And needs no overhauling.

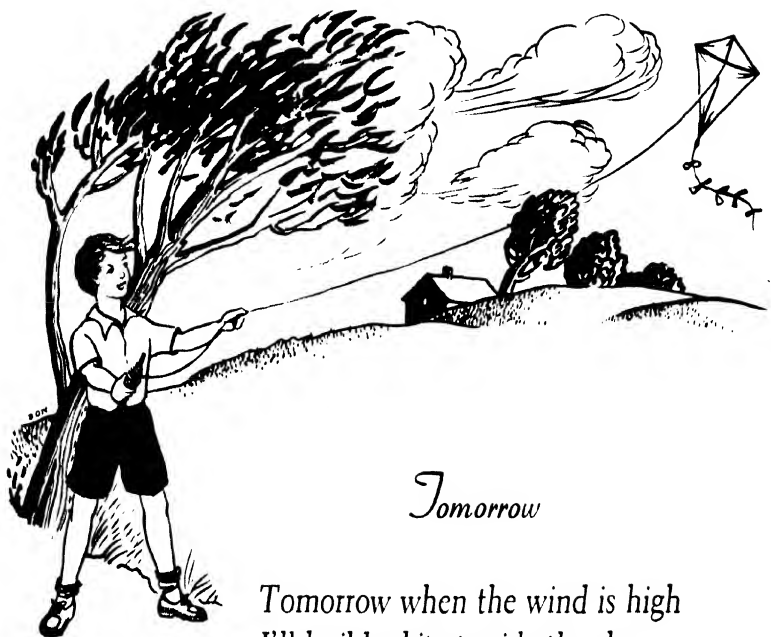
Storm Noises

The wind is mooing like a cow,
The wind is stamping with its hoof,
The rain is pecking like a dove—
Pick-pecking all along the roof.
The thunder gallops like a goat
And tramples on a murky cloud;
And, though the sky is soft as mud,
His footsteps echo long and loud.

Early in the Morning

Early in the morning
The sun gets out of bed,
Washes with a soapy cloud
His sleepy, golden head.
Fairies fold their cobweb sheets,
Buckle up their shoes.
All the garden flowers take
A bath in shining dew.





Tomorrow

Tomorrow when the wind is high
I'll build a kite to ride the sky,
Tomorrow, when the wind is high.

Tomorrow when the waters gleam
I'll build a boat to sail the stream,
Tomorrow, when the waters gleam.

Tomorrow when the roads run far
Across the hills, I'll build a car.
I'll build a car with shining wheels
To pass the other automobiles,
Tomorrow, when the roads run far.

Picture People

George and Martha Washington
Are smiling in our hall.
They look down from a picture frame
That hangs upon the wall,
And yet they do not seem to me
Like picture folk at all
But more like friends or neighbors who
Have come to make a call.
I half believe they would step down
And dance most any minute
If I should play a minuet
Upon an old-time spinet.



A Wind Runs by at Morning

A wind runs by at morning
And calls me as he runs
And draws across my eyelids
Gold ribbon of the sun's.
“Get up,” he cries, “it’s playtime
And morning time
And Maytime!”
A wind runs by at morning
And calls me as he runs.

But who shall call the robin
Asleep inside the shell?
His little house is sealed so tight
How can he ever tell
That it is spring and playtime
And morning time
And Maytime?
And yet he seems to know it
And know it very well.



For now he has arisen
And broken through his prison

What voice awakes the robin
Asleep inside the shell?



The Day Is Dancing . . .

The day is dancing with the wind;
It dances on its grassy feet;
It tosses high its head of trees;
It lifts its leafy arms with ease
And makes the grasshoppers repeat
Their humming tune, and all the bees
The day is dancing with the wind;

And not a single thing is still,
Not pools that make a watery ripple,
Nor shining snakes all bended triple,
Nor clouds that rumple up the sky,
Nor even shadows running by,
For everything has come unpinned
The day is dancing with the wind.



Clock Pixies

There are two little pixies who live in our clock.

One is named tick.

One is named tock.

One makes the pendulum quiver and rock.

The other one hoards in his little brown crock

The hours of gold;

And, oh, they're so old!

(These two little pixies who live in our clock.)

There are two little pixies who live in our clock.

One is called TICK.

One is called TOCK.

They point their thin hands to the solemn old
numbers

(Each takes a turn while the other one slumbers)

And they sing as they work till it's not hard to mock

The humming of TICK

And the droning of TOCK.

There are two little pixies who live in our clock.

One is named TICK.

One is named TOCK.

And, oh, how I really should like to unlock

The little brown door

And let out on the floor

These musical pixies

(As rhythmic as nixies)

To let them go dancing as long as they choose

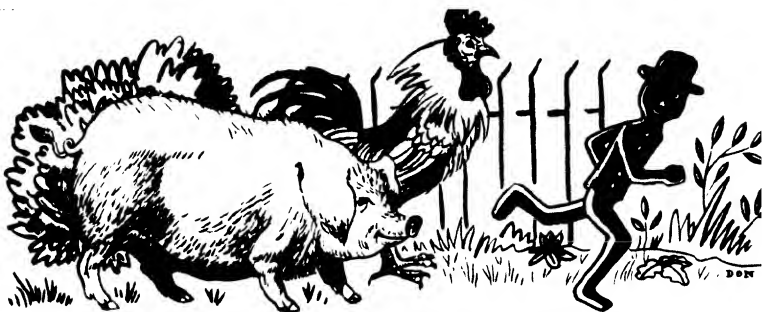
Till they tatter their clothes and shatter their shoes;

But Mother has hidden the key to the clock

And she says a vacation would be a great shock

To industrious TICK

And laborious TOCK.



The Gingerbread Man

(A rhymed fairy tale)

The gingerbread man gave a gingery shout:
“Quick! Open the oven and let me out!”
He stood up straight in his baking pan.
He jumped to the floor and away he ran.
“Catch me,” he called, “if you can, can, can.”

The gingerbread man met a cock and a pig
And a dog that was brown and twice as big
As himself. But he called to them all as he ran,
“You can’t catch a runaway gingerbread man.”

The gingerbread man met a reaper and sower.
The gingerbread man met a thresher and mower;
But no matter how fast they scampered and ran
They couldn’t catch up with the gingerbread man.

Then he came to a fox and he turned to face him.
He dared Old Reynard to follow and chase him;
But when he stepped under the fox's nose
Something happened. What do you s'pose?
The fox gave a snap. The fox gave a yawn,
And the gingerbread man was gone, gone, GONE.



In a Coral Cave

A mermaid sat in a coral cave
And the coral cave was her home.
She sewed some lace for a window space
And the lace was the white sea foam—
She sewed on a beautiful drapery
Made of the frothy foam of the sea.

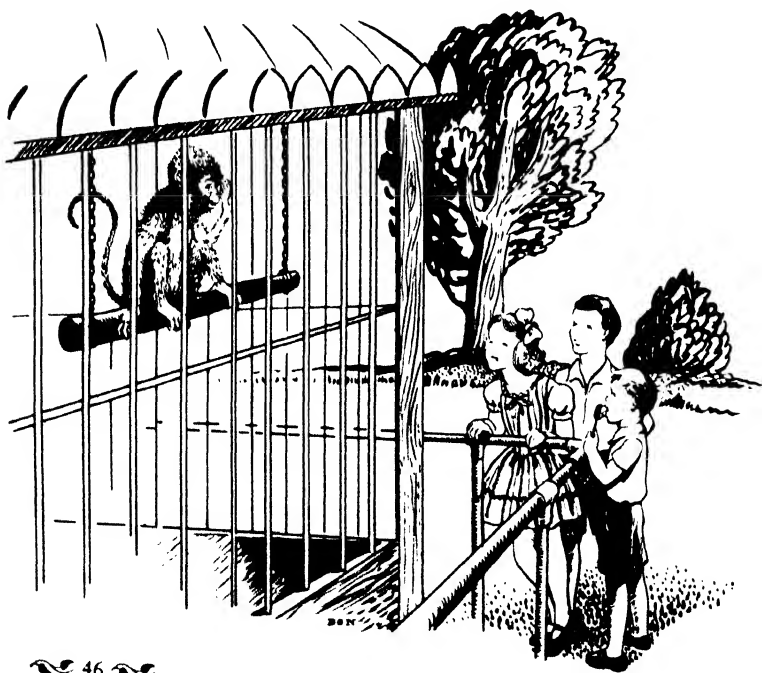
A mermaid worked in her garden green,
She worked with shovel and seed.
She planted the sea anemones
And dug up the brown seaweed,
And over her flowers with dip and rise
The goldfish floated like butterflies.

A mermaid swam to her pantry shelf
And her pantry shelf was a shell.
She wanted a snack. So she helped herself
To the jellyfish's jell.
She spread her bread with the jelly pink
And the cowfish gave her some milk to drink.
She ate with a shell that was shaped like a ladle
And went to bed in a huge shell cradle.



When You Talk to a Monkey

When you talk to a monkey
He seems very wise.
He scratches his head,
And he blinks both his eyes;
But he won't say a word.
He just swings on a rail
And makes a big question mark
Out of his tail.





Fire on the Hearth

A goblin lives in the chimney place,
A goblin squats on the brick.
He wrinkles his red and ugly face
As he crunches a great pine stick.
He crunches a stick and he gnaws a coal,
And if he could leap from his sooty hole,
He would gobble the table and all the chairs
And hiss aloud as he rushed upstairs.
He would burst through the roof and kick down the
wall
And then we should have no house at all.

Oh, I'm glad that the goblin with all his tricks
Is trapped by a grate in his hole of bricks!

Cats and Dogs

Two kittens and their cousins
Went out to walk one day.
They walked by tens and dozens
Along the King's Highway.
They tied up all the traffic;
They blocked up all the bridges.
They made a fringe of cat-tails
On hilltops and on ridges.

“So many cats all wearing hats
And carrying picnic lunches
May have the right both day and night
To prowl. But not in bunches,”
Policemen said, and turned quite red
And waved their traffic mittens;
But “SCAT” and “SHOO” would never do
To send home all those kittens.

And so they called the puppies out—
The puppies and their brothers.
(There may have been some sisters, too,
And aunts, perhaps, and others.)

And every pup, his ears pricked up,
Heard distant purrs and mewing
And ran into the public square
To see what could be doing.

A scratch, a bark, a flying spark,
A scamper and a squeeze!
Then all the cats had left the streets
And taken to the trees.

So after that when any cat
Was sick of milk or porridge
And thought field mice would taste quite nice
He went alone to forage
(He did not take by tens and dozens
His kittens or his kittens' cousins.)



I Have a Little Witch Cat

I have a little witch cat.

She sleeps the livelong day.

But at the heart of midnight

She prowls far away.

She pads up the hilltop

And purrs against the moon,

And to the wind's fast fiddling

She sings a howling tune.

Then down into the valley,

On the hill's far side,

She glides away thinly

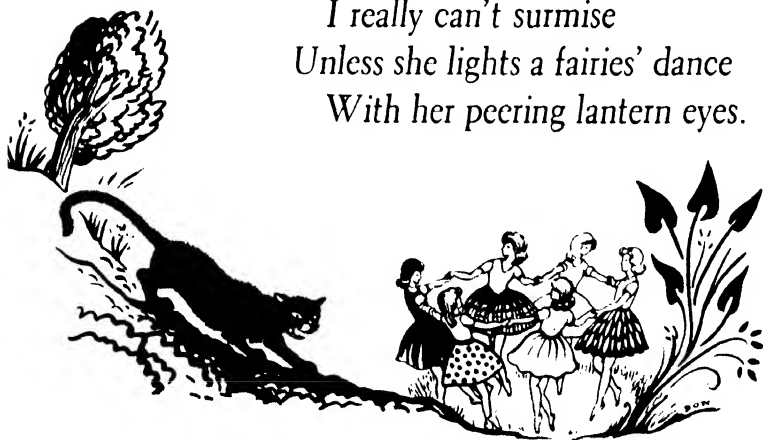
As thin shadows glide;

And what she does thereafter

I really can't surmise

Unless she lights a fairies' dance

With her peering lantern eyes.



Squirrel Feet

Little squirrel feet on the roof top running,
High overhead as I lie in my bed,
Are you out working? Or are you out funning,
Little squirrel feet on the roof top running?

My how you scramble! And my how you scamper
When the rain comes and the evening grows damper!
Down from the chimney and out on the caves—
Then what a leap to a tight rope of leaves!
I shall be glad when you get to your nest,
Then I can turn on my pillow and rest,
Little squirrel feet on the roof top running

To a Butterfly

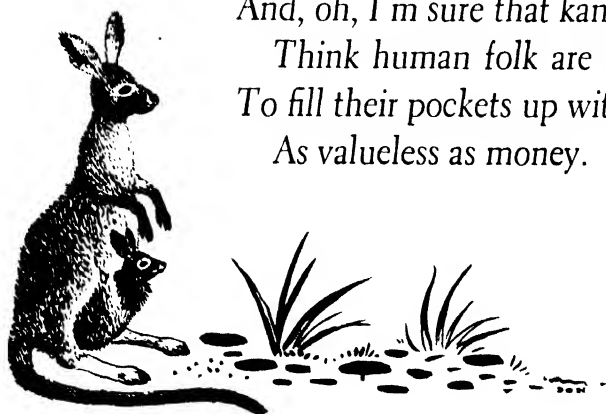
Butterfly, flutter by
Fast as you're able.
Here is my flower bed
Set like a table.
Here are white lily cups—
Pansy plates, blue,
Holding fresh honey for you.

Tails

The kangaroo has a heavy tail
She sits on for a chair.
There's scarcely any tail at all
Upon the polar bear.
But the monkey has the nicest tail
Of any living thing,
For he can hook it to a branch
And use it as a swing.

Pockets

I never knew a kangaroo—
A sister or a brother—
Who didn't ride, when young, inside
The pocket of his mother;
And, oh, I'm sure that kangaroos
Think human folk are funny
To fill their pockets up with things
As valueless as money.





Sea Lions

The sea lions live in a little rock pool.
They climb on the rocks when the water's too cool
For diving and dipping.
Though they do not have feet, and they cannot wear
slippers
They climb just the same on their funny flat flippers
Without sliding or slipping.

Color

Who knows when the tiger passes
Through the stripes of jungle grasses
In his coat so subtly made
Half of sun and half of shade—
Who knows when the tiger passes?

Who can find a leopard sleeping
On the bough, beneath the creeping
Vine, his softly spotted
Fur amid the dotted
Shadow? Who believes
It's more than sun and leaves
When he sees a leopard sleeping?

Who can see a bear that goes
Riding on the Arctic floes?
When the long day glistens bright
Who can see white framed in white?
Seal and salmon, O take care
Lest upon you, unaware,
Come the snowstorm of a bear.



Noses

I suppose that a nose
Is as long as it grows,
And that's why the elephant's
Touches his toes.

Necks

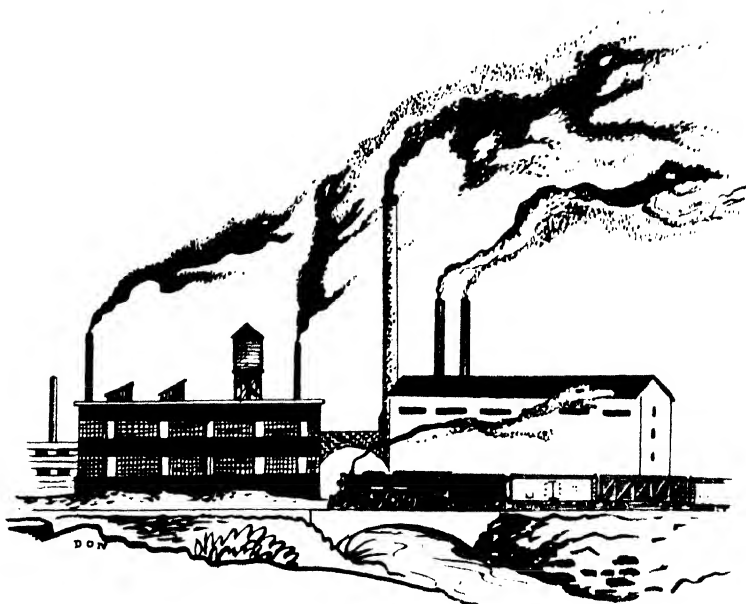
The swan has a neck that is curly and long.
The camel has one that is shaggy and strong.
But the spotted giraffe
Has a neck and a half.

On the Way to the Zoo

If you see a white wagon
That's pulled by a horse
And has a steam whistle,
You'll know that of course
It carries fresh pop corn
And crackajack, too,
And peanuts for children
Who visit the zoo.

Smoke Animals

Out of the factory chimney, tall,
Great black animals like to crawl.
They push each other and shove and crowd.
They nose the wind and they claw a cloud,
And they walk right out on the empty sky
With their tails all curled and their heads held high;
But their terrible fierceness is just a joke
For they're only made of a puff of smoke.



Robin Never Went to School

Robin never went to school,
Never learned to read or write,
Yet he makes a far, swift flight
Every autumn, every spring,
(Oh, the daring of his wing!)
Robin, what makes you so wise
In the geography of skies?

Robin never learned a trade,
Never learned to pound or saw,
Yet he builds of stick and straw
(When his wooing song is sung)
A safe shelter for his young,
Builds a nest without a flaw.
Robin, how have this gold bill
And this claw found out their skill?

Song of the Wood Thrush

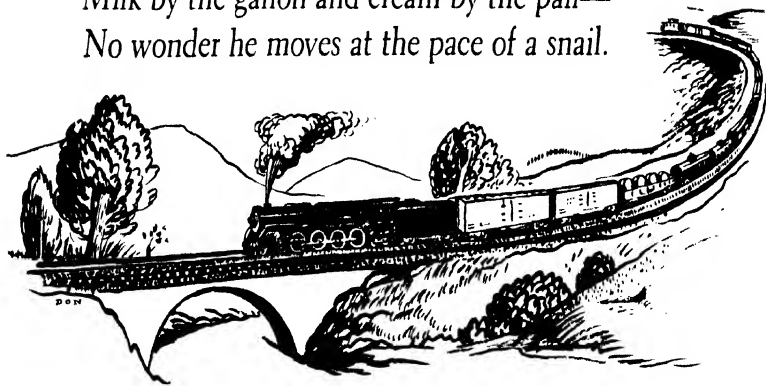
I saw a brown and spotted thrush
Sitting in a hawthorn bush;
And as he sang, a hawthorn flower
Dropped petals on him in a shower.

The Freight Train

The slow freight wriggles along the rail
With a red caboose for a lashing tail,
With a one-eyed engine for a head
The slow freight follows the river bed.

He moves like a snake that has grown too fat,
One that has swallowed a frog and a rat;
But a giant of snakes is the moving freight
And these are some of the things he ate:

A herd of sheep and a hundred hens
And dozens of pigs with crates for pens
And horses and cows by the sixes and tens;
And these are some of the things he drank:
Oil and gasoline by the tank,
Milk by the gallon and cream by the pail—
No wonder he moves at the pace of a snail.



Song of the Wild Bee

Mumble, mumble, do not grumble
Bum - ble - bee.
Do your singing without stinging,
Make for me
Lots of honey from the sunny
Field of clover.
Rest in flowers from the showers
Till they're over.

Bridges

Old London Bridge was very wide
With shops and houses on each side.
And Brooklyn Bridge is very high;
It seems to hang down from the sky.
But, oh, last night, from chair to table
A spider flung her silver cable
And straight across the air she sped
Upon a bridge as thin as thread!

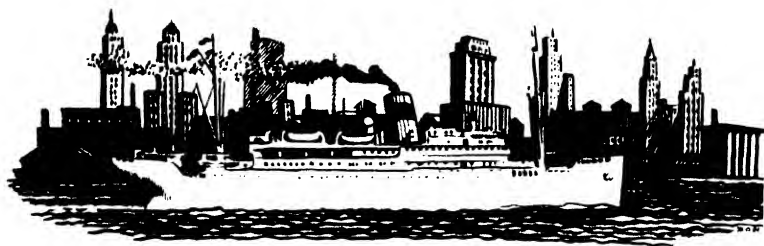
The Grumbling Truck

There is a truck that rumbles by
And grumbles as he rumbles.
His packages are piled up high
And shake them off, though he may try,
There's not a crate that tumbles.

There is a truck that goes to town
And tries to bump his bundles down,
But though he sways and rocks and stumbles
There's not a single box that tumbles.

When this same truck comes rattling back
Without a carton or a sack
He takes no trouble to be bright,
But with a feeble, blinking light
Through dusk and dark he gropes and fumbles;
And though he hasn't any load
To make him weary on the road
He grumbles as he rumbles.





When a Ship Sails By

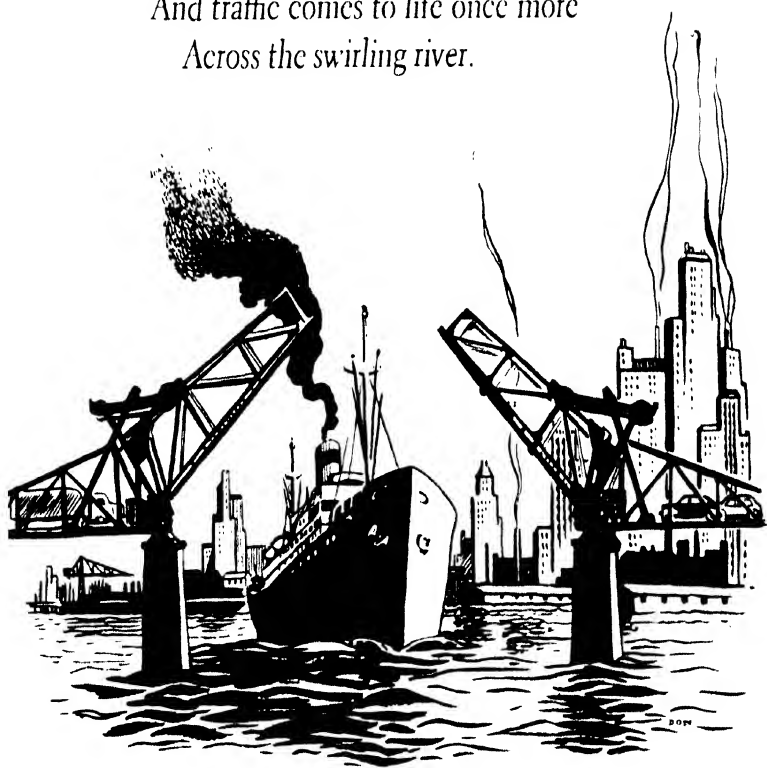
When a ship sails down the river
 She holds her smokestack high
And whistles to the bridges
 To rise and let her by,
When a ship sails down the river

The nearest bridge makes answer
 By ringing loud her bell.
The noisy, bustling highway
 Is hushed as by a spell
Of magic. Horns and sirens
 Forget to shriek and yell.

Taxicabs and buses let
 Their droning motors die.
And all the city holds its breath
 To see a ship go by.

*The water wrinkles with her weight
And runs away in ridges.
And one by one they break in half,
The mighty jackknife bridges.*

*Then one by one they close again
With a ringing clang and quiver;
And traffic comes to life once more
Across the swirling river.*



On the Tops of Buses

On the tops of buses
Is where I like to ride;
Let the timid people
Take the seats inside.
I would go a climbing
Up the twisted stair
And let the little breezes
Run their fingers through my hair.
I would watch the viaduct
Open wide its hollow,
Like an angry monster
Just about to swallow
Us. I should duck my head, then,
Through the dreadful dark way
And quickly bob it up again
When we reached the parkway.
All the biggest buildings
Would tower high beside me
And little gusts of smoke would come,
Now and then, to hide me.
I should watch my shadow

*Skimming through the streets
And the shadow heads of people
In the other seats . . .
Oh, on the tops of buses
Is where I like to ride!
Let the timid people
Take the seats inside!*



Headlight

A car at night is like a cat
That goes in search of this and that.
It crouches low along the ground
And makes a purring sort of sound.
A car is like a cat at night
With peering yellow eyes of light.

The road is like a dusty mouse
That scampers on from house to house,
A mouse that knows he's watched and followed
And runs for fear of being swallowed.



The New Parasol

I have a new parasol, red as a rose,
And when I stand under it, what do you s'pose?
My little white dress turns a beautiful pink.
There must be a parasol magic, I think.

Darkness

The darkness pours into my room
Like coffee poured into a cup;
For daylight leaves an emptiness
That nighttime must fill up.

Golden Zippers

The darkness never cracks at all
From holding heavy moons and dippers,
For shooting stars slide down the sky
And fasten it with golden zippers.

The Steam Shovel

The steam digger
Is much bigger
 Than the biggest beast I know.
He snorts and roars
Like the dinosaurs
 That lived long years ago.

He crouches low
 On his tractor paws
And scoops the dirt up
 With his jaws;
Then swings his long
 Stiff neck around
And spits it out
 Upon the ground . . .

Oh, the steam digger
Is much bigger
 Than the biggest beast I know.
He snorts and roars
Like the dinosaurs
 That lived long years ago.



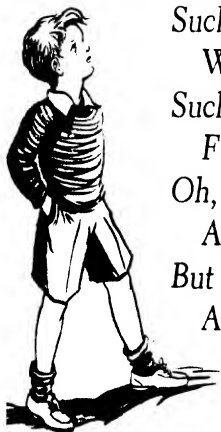


Trails of Smoke

When I'm an aviator
And have learned to use my wings
I'll soar above the barn roof
Where the swallow sings,
Above the fork of lacy elm,
Above the towering oak,
And near a leafy rim of sky
I'll follow trails of smoke.

Such trails as puffing engines make
When they climb a purple hill;
Such trails as reaching chimneys spin
From factory and mill.

Oh, the roads of the world are plodding roads!
And they're for earth-bound folk;
But I shall climb with a metal wing
And follow trails of smoke.

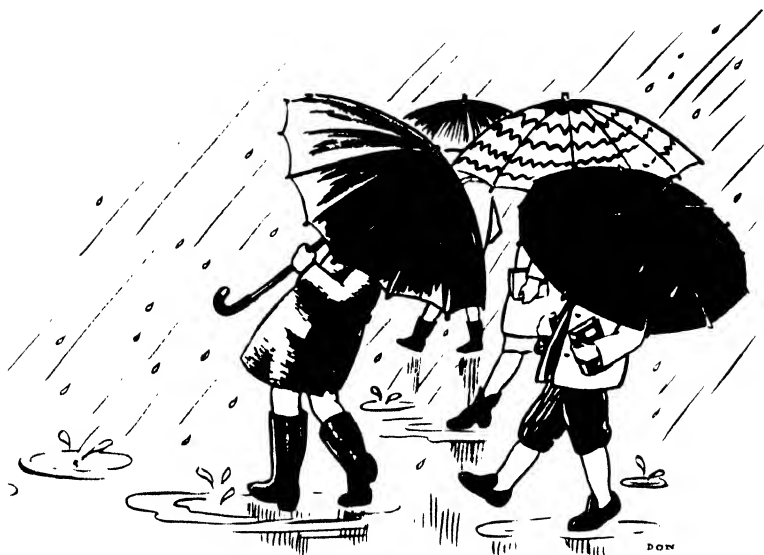


God Is Like This

I cannot see the wind at all
Or hold it in my hand,
And yet I know there is a wind
Because it swirls the sand.
I know there is a wondrous wind
Because I glimpse its power
Whenever it bends low a tree
Or sways the smallest flower.

And God is very much like this,
Invisible as air;
I cannot touch or see Him, yet
I know that He is there
Because I glimpse His wondrous works
And goodness everywhere.





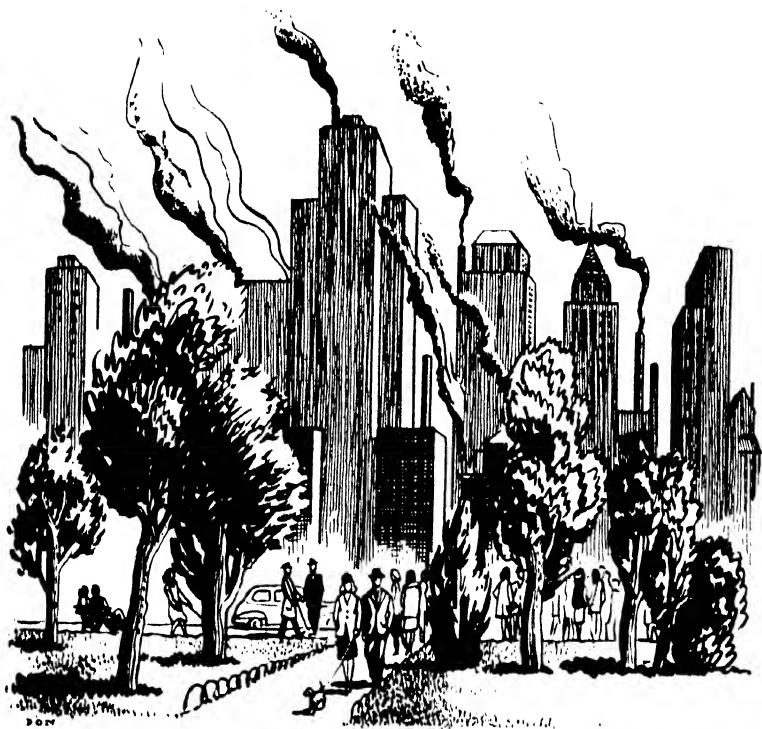
Umbrellas

When the rain is raining
And April days are cool
All the big umbrellas
Go bumping home from school.
They bump the blowing cloudburst,
They push the pushing storm.
They leap a muddy puddle
Or get into a huddle
To keep each other warm.

But who is underneath them
You really cannot tell
Unless you know the overshoes
Or rubbers very well
Or the flippy-flop galoshes
With their swishes and their swashes
Or the running rubber boots
With their scampers and their scoots. . . .

Oh, when the rain is raining
And April days are cool
I like to watch umbrellas
Come bumping home from school!
I like to watch and wonder
Who's hiding halfway under. . . .





The City

*Beside the park the city stands
With chimney fingers on her hands.
She looks about with window eyes
And breathes a black breath on the skies.*

Traffic on the Milky Way

There is a road that spans the night,
A road that hides by day;
There is a road all dusty-white
That's called "The Milky Way";
And on this road the passing cars
Have twinkling headlights made of stars.

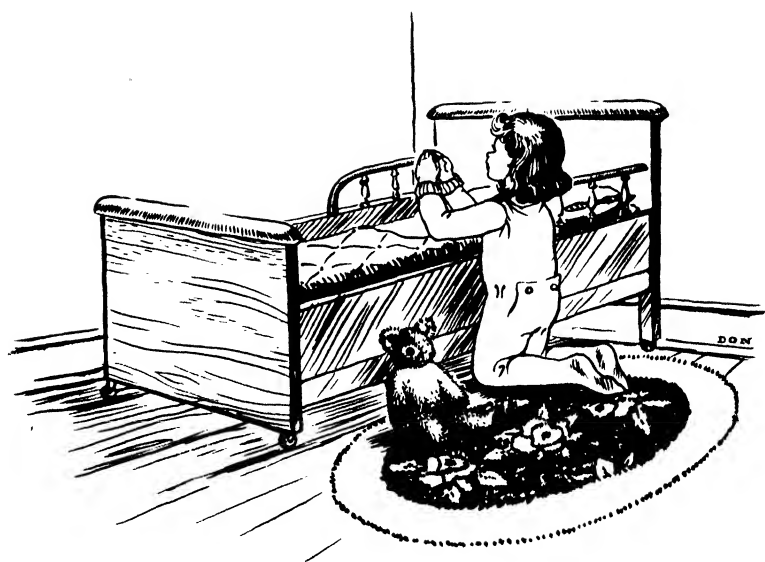
Star Dippers

There are two dippers in the sky
(At least that's what they say).
Who tipped them up and spilled the milk
That makes the Milky Way?



Saying a Prayer

When I kneel down
To say my prayer
Each word goes climbing
Up a stair
Of wind and air
To where
God sits
And listens and rejoices
In little children's thoughts
And voices.



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